

Message Text

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44

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-15 RSR-01 /113 W

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R 021316Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2761

INFO USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TS, PINT

SUBJECT: BOURGUIBA SPEECH AUGUST 1

1. DURING THREE-HOUR SPEECH IN MONASTIR AUGUST 1, PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA SPOKE ON TWO PRINCIPAL TOPICS -- CORRUPTION AND AMNESTY. DURING THE LAST TWO WEEKS THERE HAVE BEEN RUMORS IN TUNIS THAT PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA HAD SPOKEN OUT STRONGLY AGAINST CORRUPTION AT JULY 22 MEETING OF NATION'S CADRES. SPEECH PROVED MILD WARNING ON CORRUPTION. BOURGUIBA ONLY SAID THAT MINISTERS WHOULD HAVE NO MORE THAN TWO HOUSES AND INSTEAD OF SPENDING MONEY LAVISHLY SHOULD PUT IT IN SAVINGS ACCOUNTS.

2. BOURGUIBA OFFERED AMNESTY FOR FORMER DISSIDENTS AND FORMER OPPONENTS OF REGIME WHO FLED THE COUNTRY IF THEY RETURN BEFORE END OF YEAR. HE SAID THIS WAS BECAUSE OF HIS CONCERN FOR THE INNOCENT FAMILIES OF THESE PEOPLE. IF THEY RETURNED, THEY WOULD BE ABLE TO LIVE IN PEACE BUT WOULD HAVE NO POLITICAL RIGHTS.

3. PRESIDENT SPECIFICALLY STATED THAT THIS AMNESTY OFFER INCLUDED FORMER MINISTER OF NATIONAL ECONOMY AHMED BEN SALAH.

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HOWEVER, BOURGUIBA SAID THAT IF BEN SALAH RETURNED HE WOULD BE

TRIED ON THE CHARGES STEMMING FROM HIS FEB 4 ESCAPE FROM PRISON.
BOURGUIBA ALSO HELD OUT POSSIBILITY OF PRESIDENTIAL CLEMENCY
AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE TRIAL.

4. COMMENT: UNUSUAL TO HAVE AMNESTY WITH TIME LIMIT BUT LIKELY
THAT SOME FORMER OPPONENTS WILL RETURN AND BE REINTEGRATED INTO
SOCIETY. PROMISE OF TRIAL FOR BEN SALAH WITH ONLY POSSIBILITY
OF CLEMENCY MAKES BOURGUIBA'S OFFER A NON-OFFER. IT IS UNLIKELY
THAT BEN SALAH WOULD RETURN ON THESE CONSITIONS. SOURCES CLOSE
TO BEN SALAH FAMILY SAY THAT FIRST INDICATOR THAT BOURGUIBA
OFFER IS SERIOUS WOULD BE INCLUSION OF MOHAMED BEN SALAH ON
ANNUAL PRESIDENTIAL AMNESTY LIST AUGUST 3.
SEELYE

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